

In the Specification:

Please amend the specification as follows:

a' At page 1, line 1, please insert -- This application is a 371 of PCT/JP97/03591 and claims priority to Japanese patent application no. 267126/1996, filed October 8, 1996. --

see pg. 9-10 in the Spec. F At pages 9 to 10, please remove the "BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS" and reinsert them at page 2, after paragraph 1, immediately preceding "PROBLEM TO BE SOLVED BY THE INVENTION."

In the Claims:

Please amend claim 1 as follows:

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1. (Amended) A BALB/c mouse strain ~~having the character of~~ that develops natural onset of autoimmune arthritis, ~~[the character being derived from]~~ the mouse strain denoted SKG [strain].

Please add the following new claims:

- Q3
- 2. (New) The BALB/c mouse strain of claim 1, wherein the autoimmune arthritis comprises rheumatoid arthritis.
 3. (New) The BALB/c mouse strain of claim 1, wherein the autoimmune arthritis is characterized by arthritis developing in the joints of the forelegs and hind legs and progressing to joint stiffening.
 4. (New) The BALB/c mouse strain of claim 1, wherein the mouse produces autoantibody against type II collagen.
 5. (New) The BALB/c mouse strain of claim 1, wherein onset of autoimmune arthritis begins at about 3 to 4 months after birth of the mouse.